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Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau

Letter dated 29 September 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations and Chairman of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I am pleased to send you attached herewith a statement issued on 18 September 2003 by the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau, in which the Group calls on donors to consider extending emergency assistance for Guinea-Bissau to be able to return to democratic rule (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Dumisani S. **Kumalo**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the
Republic of South Africa and
Chairman of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau

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Annex to the letter dated 29 September 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations and Chairman of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Statement issued on 18 September 2003 by the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau

1. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau hereby calls on donors to consider extending emergency assistance for Guinea-Bissau to enable it to return to democratic rule following the resignation of President Kumba Yala.

2. On 14 September 2003, the military forces in Guinea-Bissau staged a coup d'état against President Kumba Yala. The international community condemned the assumption of power through non-constitutional means.

3. Immediately after the coup, a ministerial delegation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) visited Guinea-Bissau and met with the military leaders and the deposed President. They were assisted by the Ambassador of Brazil to Guinea-Bissau, representing the Presidency of the Community of the Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), and the United Nations representatives in Guinea-Bissau. As a result of those consultations, an agreement was reached between the Armed Forces and President Kumba Yala on the formation of a broad-based transitional government of national unity. ECOWAS called for a transition that would be of reasonable duration, at the end of which credible, free and fair legislative and presidential elections would be conducted. In a statement on behalf of the presidency of CPLP, the Brazilian Government urged the military and the political parties of Guinea-Bissau to demonstrate a firm commitment towards the restoration of justice, the rule of law and the respect of human rights, in the context of the preparation of upcoming parliamentarian elections.

4. Statements were also issued by the Secretary-General and the Security Council, both calling for the restoration of constitutional order and, in the case of the Security Council, for the holding of legislative elections as soon as possible.

5. On 17 September, President Kumba Yala issued a statement in which he announced that he had relinquished power to make way for a civilian government to be named. President Kumba Yala also appealed to the international community to assist the transition government by providing financial and material assistance to allow the electoral process to move forward.

6. The Advisory Group fully supports the efforts made by the good offices of ECOWAS, the presidency of CPLP and the United Nations offices in Guinea-Bissau, particularly the common concerns expressed about the dire socio-economic situation faced by the people of Guinea-Bissau. We would hope that the donors see this period, as uncertain as it may appear, as an opportunity to give emergency assistance to the people of Guinea-Bissau as they put in place a credible Government and rebuild their country. Ambassador Dumisani S. Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations and Chairman of the Advisory Group, noted that there was an urgent need to support an early return to civilian rule and the holding of elections in the shortest possible time.

7. The Advisory Group was formed in 2002 and is composed of the permanent representatives of Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, the Netherlands and Portugal. Ambassador Gert Rosenthal, Permanent Representative of Guatemala and President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Crispin Grey-Johnson, Permanent Representative of the Gambia and Chairman of the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau, and Ambassador Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola and Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, take part in the work of the Advisory Group, whose mandate is to examine the humanitarian and economic needs of Guinea-Bissau, review relevant programmes of support, prepare recommendations for a long-term programme of support, and provide advice on how to ensure that the assistance of the international community in supporting Guinea-Bissau is adequate, coherent, well coordinated and effective, and promotes synergy.

8. The Advisory Group recalls that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) created an emergency economic management fund as a mechanism to provide broad-based international support to the Government of Guinea-Bissau. UNDP is also assisting the country in preparing for elections that were originally scheduled for October 2003.

9. The Advisory Group will continue to follow the situation in Guinea-Bissau. With the emergency assistance of the international community, the Group hopes that the socio-economic conditions in the country can be improved to benefit the population.